Renegade Press

PRESENTS

WORD SMITH

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4 FEB

A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

I've arrived in America, Mom! To the left you see me hobnobbing with famous personages. Actually, old Ronnie wasn't really there, just a cardboard cut-out of him. But it turned out so real-looking that I just had to share it with all of you. This was taken at the Rose Bowl Swap Meet in Pasadena by Michael Mann of Star Pix (thank you, guys) at their booth. Thanks also goes to Robert Spina (sound familiar?) for purchasing the photo for me. The very idea of having my picture taken with Ronald Reagan appealed to my twisted and foreign sense of humor. Doesn't hurt that these folks did a great job, either!

With this issue, we're starting to gauge the fan press reaction to *Wordsmith*. I'm happy to say that at this point we've had more positive reviews than negative . . . unless I'm only *remembering* the positive ones. In fact, I've been pleasantly surprised at how quickly David and R.G. have grown as creators in this book. I'd warned them at the beginning that it would take four to six issues for them even to "get their feet" let alone start actually guiding the story in any direction. Instead, they've shown me that they were capable from the first issue of taking the concept and working hard to get the effect we wanted when David first approached me with *Wordsmith*. Last issue's look at the moral questions involved in writing is just a beginning. Among others whose support we're grateful for, a big thank-you has to go to Harlan Ellison for giving some valuable feedback to "the guys" before the first issue went to print.

Next issue was supposed to be the point at which we discussed the question of whether or not the series would continue. For me, there *is* no question. *Wordsmith* ***should*** go on from here. However, there will be things that *will* change after #4—namely the frequency. Because both David and R.G. have full-time jobs, they can't possibly continue to do the book on a bi-monthly basis. The only reason we could even begin it that way was that they had a head-start at the beginning of the series. Unfortunately, that kind of momentum can't last forever. Starting with issue #5, *Wordsmith* will be quarterly, with a possibility of an extra annual issue done in the summer when R.G. isn't teaching. David and I have been discussing several different projects he wants to do, including the possibility of a spin-off where Clay wouldn't even be in the story at all—just the characters he writes about. It would be great to hear from our readers about this idea. Is this something you would support? Which character(s) would you like to see in this book? How would you feel about a regular series with another artist and one of Clay's characters? It's obvious that there are many different directions we could go with such a series, and we'd love to hear what you'd like to read.

Deni

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WORDSMITH

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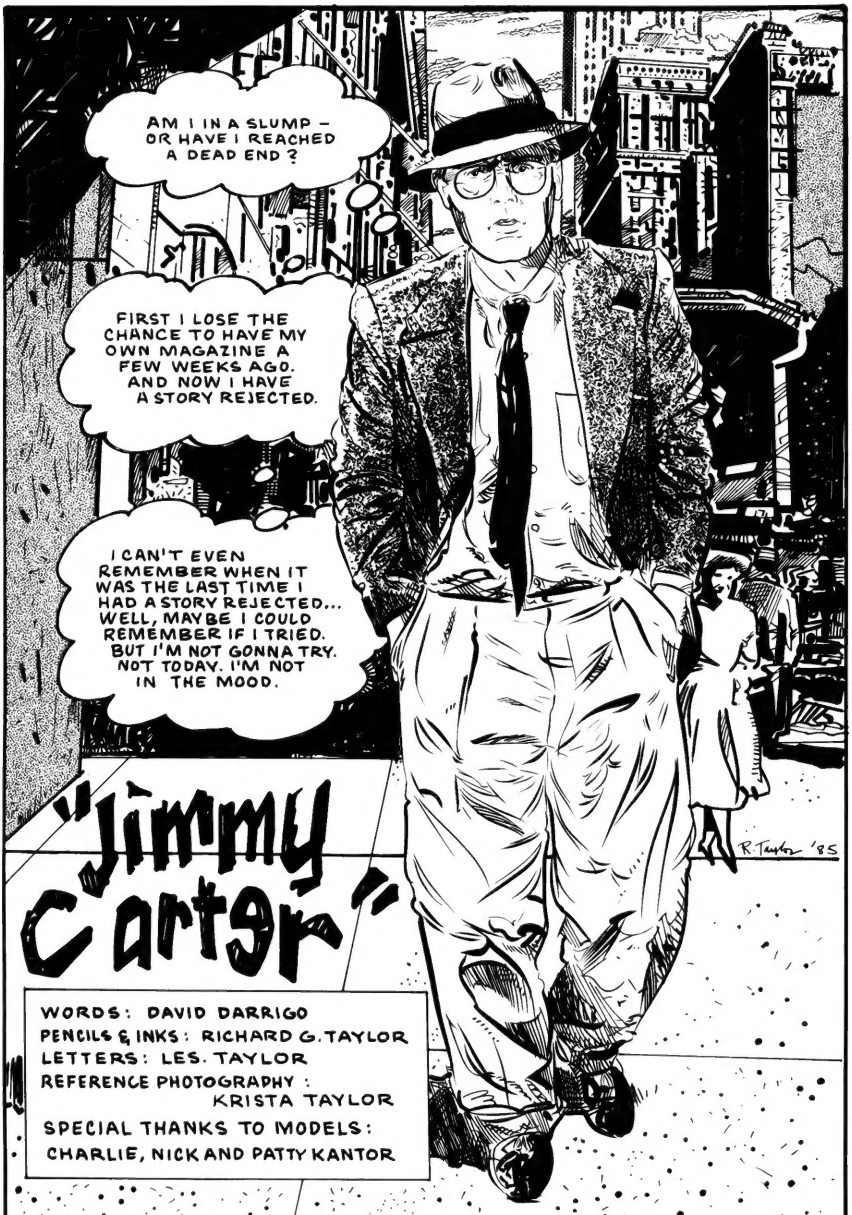

AM I IN A SLUMP – OR HAVE I REACHED A DEAD END?
FIRST I LOSE THE CHANCE TO HAVE MY OWN MAGAZINE A FEW WEEKS AGO. AND NOW I HAVE A STORY REJECTED.
I CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER WHEN IT WAS THE LAST TIME I HAD A STORY REJECTED... WELL, MAYBE I COULD REMEMBER IF I TRIED. BUT I'M NOT GONNA TRY. NOT TODAY. I'M NOT IN THE MOOD.
R. Taylor '85

"Jimmy Carter"

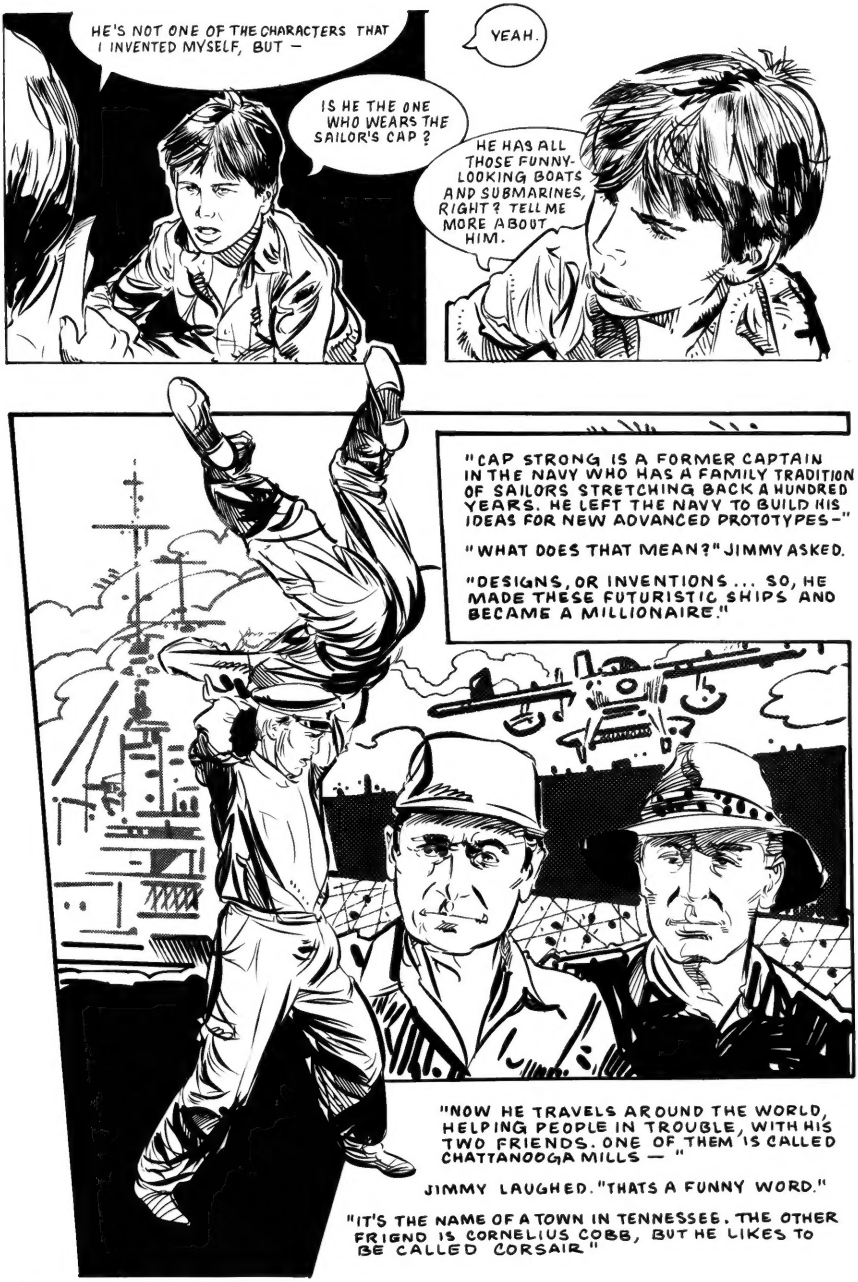
WORDS: DAVID DARRIGO
PENCILS & INKS: RICHARD G. TAYLOR
LETTERS: LES. TAYLOR
REFERENCE PHOTOGRAPHY: KRISTA TAYLOR
SPECIAL THANKS TO MODELS: CHARLIE, NICK AND PATTY KANTOR

HI, JOE.
THAT NEW MAGAZINE YOU'VE BEEN ASKIN' ME ABOUT HAS COME IN, CLAY.
DAMN! THIS COULD HAVE BEEN MY BOOK IF I HADN'T BEEN SO STUBBORN.
MISTER MYSTERY
NEIL
I WAS READIN' IT LAST NIGHT... I THINK IT'S A WASH-OUT COMPARED TO YOUR IDEA.
THANKS, PAL.
I'LL TAKE THIS MISTER MYSTERY.
UHHH, YES SIR.
PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS WANNA TRY SOMETHIN' NEW, CLAY. THEY'RE JUST CURIOUS. KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
DON'T WORRY, JOE. I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN. I'M EVEN GOING TO BUY A COPY FOR MYSELF. IT LOOKS GOOD.

SEE YA LATER, JOE.
HEY, MISTER!
WANT YOUR SHOES SHINED?
NO, THANKS.
HEY, IS THAT A NEW HERO MAGAZINE?
YES.
IS HE LIKE THE SHADOW?
MORE OR LESS.
WHAT'S HE CALLED?
MISTER MYSTERY.
MISTER MYSTERY? THAT'S KEEN!... WHAT DOES 'MYSTERY' MEAN?
IT'S LIKE A SECRET. IT'S THE UNKNOWN... YOU CAN SEE SOMETHING WITH YOUR EYES, BUT YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU SEE.
OH.

ALRIGHT. YOU MAY SHINE MY SHOES... A MYSTERY IS SOMETHING A DETECTIVE SOLVES. IN A STORY THERE MAY BE A MURDER AND A DETECTIVE HAS TO FIND THE KILLER. WHO'S THE KILLER? WELL, THAT'S A MYSTERY.
OH.
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF A HERO CALLED 'THE DOMINO DETECTIVE'?
THAT'S KEEN!
THAT'S THE NAME OF ONE OF MY HEROES. I WRITE STORIES FOR THESE MAGAZINES.
YEAH? OH, YOU'RE JOSHIN' ME.
NO, I'M NOT.
MY NAME'S CLAY.
GO OVER AND TALK TO JOE. HE'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT ME.
HEY, CLAY.
YES?
WHAT'S 'DOMINO' MEAN?
NEVER MIND. HERE TAKE THIS MAGAZINE FOR A TIP.

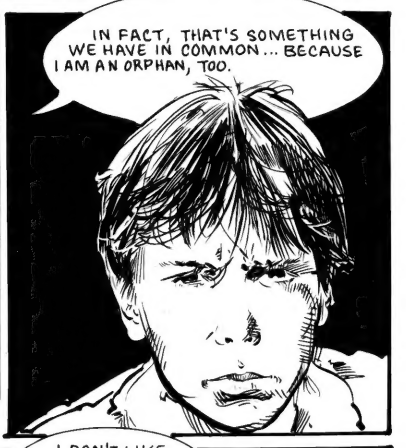
THE NEXT DAY...
HUH? OH, IT'S YOU. HI... I DIDN'T GET YOUR NAME YESTERDAY.
HI, CLAY
MY NAME'S JIMMY CARTER... JOE SAYS YOU REALLY ARE A HERO WRITER.
YOU SEE? I'M NO JOSHER.
CAN I COME AND SEE WHERE YOU LIVE?
SURE. COME ON.
JIMMY SPENT THE NEXT COUPLE OF HOURS POURING THROUGH MY COLLECTION OF PULPS WHILE I WORKED BESIDE HIM.
WHO'S YOUR FAVORITE HERO, JIMMY?
DOC. SAVAGE, I GUESS.
OH? I WRITE A CHARACTER CALLED 'CAP STRONG.' HE'S AN IMITAT-, HE'S VERY SIMILAR TO DOC SAVAGE.

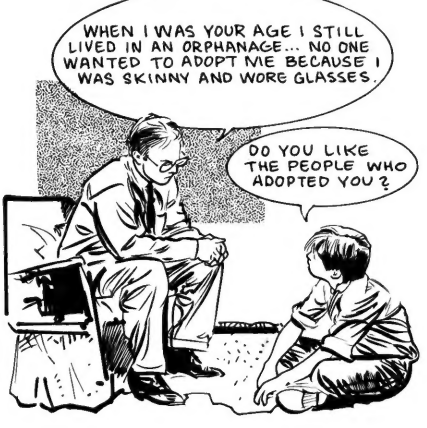

HE'S NOT ONE OF THE CHARACTERS THAT I INVENTED MYSELF, BUT —
IS HE THE ONE WHO WEARS THE SAILOR'S CAP ?
YEAH.
HE HAS ALL THOSE FUNNY-LOOKING BOATS AND SUBMARINES, RIGHT ? TELL ME MORE ABOUT HIM.
"CAP STRONG IS A FORMER CAPTAIN IN THE NAVY WHO HAS A FAMILY TRADITION OF SAILORS STRETCHING BACK A HUNDRED YEARS. HE LEFT THE NAVY TO BUILD HIS IDEAS FOR NEW ADVANCED PROTOTYPES—"
"WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?" JIMMY ASKED.
"DESIGNS, OR INVENTIONS... SO, HE MADE THESE FUTURISTIC SHIPS AND BECAME A MILLIONAIRE."
"NOW HE TRAVELS AROUND THE WORLD, HELPING PEOPLE IN TROUBLE, WITH HIS TWO FRIENDS. ONE OF THEM IS CALLED CHATTANOOGA MILLS — "
JIMMY LAUGHED. "THATS A FUNNY WORD."
"IT'S THE NAME OF A TOWN IN TENNESSEE. THE OTHER FRIGND IS CORNELIUS COBB, BUT HE LIKES TO BE CALLED CORSAIR"

DON'T YOU THINK YOU BETTER BE GOING HOME, JIMMY? YOUR FOLKS MIGHT BE WORRYING.
I DON'T HAVE ANY FOLKS.

THERE'S JUST MY FATHER AND MY BROTHERS. BUT THEY AREN'T MY REAL FATHER AND BROTHERS.. I'M AN ORPHAN.

OH...I SEE.
IS BEING AN ORPHAN A BAD THING, CLAY?
NO. NOT AT ALL.


IN FACT, THAT'S SOMETHING WE HAVE IN COMMON... BECAUSE I AM AN ORPHAN, TOO.


WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE I STILL LIVED IN AN ORPHANAGE... NO ONE WANTED TO ADOPT ME BECAUSE I WAS SKINNY AND WORE GLASSES.
DO YOU LIKE THE PEOPLE WHO ADOPTED YOU?

I DON'T LIKE THEM JIMMY. I LOVE THEM.
I DON'T LOVE MY FATHER... I WISH I COULD LIVE HERE WITH YOU.
RB KITAJ

I SPENT A LOT OF TIME WITH JIMMY IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS... TOO MUCH TIME. I FIGURED THE BOY WAS WORTH IT. I HAD THE FEELING THAT I WAS CREATING SOMETHING THAT COULDN'T BE MEASURED BY DOLLARS AND WAS MORE VALUABLE THAN ANY STORY I EVER WROTE.
WE TOOK IN THREE BASE-BALL GAMES. ALL IN DIFF-ERENT NEW YORK STADIUMS. WE SAW THE YANKEES, THE GIANTS AND THE DODGERS.
WE SAW GARY COOPER IN 'THE LIVES OF A BENGAL LANCER'.
WE WENT TO THE ZOO. A WOMAN MISTOOK US FOR FATHER AND SON WHILE WE WERE THERE.

I'D NEVER MET JIMMY'S FATHER UNTIL ONE DAY WHEN HE CAME TO GET HIM.
I'M HENRY CARTER; JIMMY'S FATHER. JOE AT THE NEWSSTAND TOLD ME WHERE YOU LIVE. I'VE COME TO TAKE JIMMY HOME.
SURE. COME ON IN.
I'M VERY CROSS AT YOU, SON.
YOU KNOW YOU SHOULDN'T BE HERE TODAY.
HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE VISITING HIS RELATIVES WITH US... JIMMY'S A GOOD BOY, BUT SOMETIMES HE GETS — HEH, HEH — AS STUBBORN AS A MULE. HE WON'T LISTEN TO ANYBODY.
I'M SORRY, I WOULD HAVE SENT HIM HOME IF I'D KNOWN.
SAY GOOD-BYE, JIMMY.
'BYE, CLAY
I KNEW I WAS SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME WITH HIM. NOW HE'S IN THE DOGHOUSE BECAUSE OF ME

I WENT BACK INTO MY APARTMENT AS THEY DISAPPEARED DOWN THE STAIRS.
YOU STUBBORN GUTTERSNIPE! YOU LITTLE HELLION! I'LL KILL YOU FOR RUNNING AWAY FROM ME LIKE THAT. DO I HAVE TO PUT A LEASH ON YOU?
AND THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING OF WHAT YOU'RE GONNA GET WHEN WE GET HOME... I DON'T WANT YOU TO EVER COME BACK HERE AGAIN. UNDERSTAND?
UNDERSTAND?
YES.
LATER, THAT SAME DAY.

THERE'S TOO MANY STAIRS.
I CLAY'S GOTTA HELP ME... HE'S GOTTA.
I'M NOT GOIN' BACK THERE. NEVER! CLAY WILL —
CLA... AAAYYY.
THAT SOUNDS LIKE JIMMY.
DID YOUR FATHER DO THIS TO YOU?
YEAH.

I KNEW HE WAS GOING TO GET THRASHED... BUT NOT LIKE THIS!
WHAT KIND OF MESS HAVE I GOTTEN MYSELF INTO? HE PROBABLY WON'T WANT TO GO HOME NOW — AND I CAN'T FORCE HIM TO GO BACK.
HERE - DRINK THIS WARM MILK. YOU CAN STAY HERE TONIGHT. YOU'LL BE SAFE WITH ME. I WON'T LET ANYONE TAKE YOU AWAY.
I'M GONNA STAY HERE WITH YOU FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE.
WE'LL TALK ABOUT THAT LATER. BUT I WANT YOU TO TELL ME SOMETHING, RIGHT NOW. HAS THIS HAPPENED TO YOU BEFORE? DOES YOUR FATHER ALWAYS BEAT YOU -
HE'S NOT MY FATHER!
I HATE HIM! I HATE ALL MY BROTHERS! I HATE EVERYBODY, EXCEPT YOU!

I LOOKED DOWN AT JIMMY AS HE SLEPT. I PRAYED FOR HIM TO HAVE SWEET DREAMS. BUT HIS DREAMS WERE MY NIGHTMARE.
I KNOW ONLY TOO WELL THE HATE THAT HE FEELS. YOU'RE BROUGHT INTO THIS WORLD AND THEN YOU FIND NO ONE WANTS YOU... I GUESS THAT'S WHY I WRITE. I JUST WANT TO MAKE UP MY OWN WORLDS. PLACES IN MY MIND THAT I CAN TRULY CALL HOME.
HE SAYS THAT HE FOUGHT BACK THIS TIME AND PUNCHED HIS FATHER.
GEEZ, THAT REALLY COMPLICATES MATTERS.
KNOCK KNOCK
HELLO. IS JIMMY HERE?
NO
HEH, HEH. WE HAD A LITTLE TUSSLE WHEN WE GOT HOME. HE'S A WILD ONE - THAT BOY. I'M TRYING TO HELP HIM, BUT HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND. YOU'RE SURE HE'S NOT HERE?

MAY I COME IN AND LOOK AROUND?
HEY! KNOCK IT OFF! YOU HEARD WHAT I SAID.
SLAM!
Gary Arbour '34
HE SHOULD HAVE LEFT THE BUILDING BY NOW. HE'S STILL DOWN-STAIRS SOMEWHERE. WAITING.
CLAY?
SHHH! GO BACK TO SLEEP.
IF HE'S LOOKING FOR TROUBLE I'LL BE HAPPY TO OBLIGE.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?

YOU KNOW WHAT I WANT. I WANT JIMMY. IF YOU'VE GOT HIM I'LL KILL YOU!
YOU HEAR ME. I'LL KILL YOU!
WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE WAY PEOPLE LIVE ? YOU SIT IN A ROOM AND PUT STUPID WORDS ON PAPER! I'M TRYING TO MAKE A BETTER WORLD FOR THESE FOOL KIDS —
-BUT DAMN IDIOTS LIKE YOU COME ALONG AND TEAR ALL MY WORK DOWN!
GOD FORGIVE ME, BUT I SAY TO HELL WITH YOU AND YOUR KIND!
JIMMY! JIMMY! YOU COME OUT HERE THIS MINUTE!
BUT JIMMY STAYED PUT.
HE'LL COME BACK TO ME SOONER OR LATER.

MY KNEES WERE WEAK. I SAT DOWN BEFORE THEY BUCKLED. MY PALMS WERE SWEATY. CARTER HAD REALLY PUT A SCARE INTO ME. THE LAST TIME I'D EVER BEEN IN A SCRAP WAS WHEN I WAS JIMMY'S AGE.
YET HERE I WAS MAKING A LIVING OUT OF WRITING ABOUT GROWN PEOPLE FIGHTING EACH OTHER... IT WAS STRANGE TO THINK CARTER'S THREAT TO KILL ME HADN'T BEEN IN MY IMAGINATION. HE WASN'T IN A STORY. HE WAS REAL.

I'D NEVER KNOWN THE TRUE MEANING OF EVIL UNTIL TODAY. EVIL WASN'T SOMETHING THAT ONLY EXISTED IN THE PULP-PAPER VILLAINS THAT I CREATED – IT WAS REAL. IT WALKED THE STREET... MAYBE CARTER WAS RIGHT. ALL I KNEW WERE STUPID WORDS... STUPID WORDS.

I TRIED TO CONVINCE MYSELF IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED THAT JIMMY WOULD HAVE RUN AWAY FROM CARTER - WITH, OR WITHOUT, MY HELP.
WAKE UP, JIMMY. WE'RE ALMOST THERE.
I WAS TAKING JIMMY UPSTATE TO HIS NEW HOME. I BELIEVED HIM WHEN HE TOLD ME HE WOULD GO ANYWHERE... EXCEPT BACK TO CARTER.
AAAAOOOOUNGH.
REMEMBER WHEN WE GET THERE - YOUR NAME IS JIMMY SAVAGE. JUST LIKE DOC.
WE TOOK A TAXI TO ST. MARY'S CONVENT AND ORPHANAGE.
ISN'T THIS A NICE PLACE, JIMMY? YOU SEE THOSE TREES OVER THERE? THAT'S WHERE I USED TO PLAY COWBOYS AND INDIANS WITH ALL THE KIDS.

MOTHER SUPERIOR, THIS IS JIMMY.
HELLO, JIMMY. MR. WASHBURN TELLS ME THAT YOU LIKE TO READ THE STORIES THAT HE WRITES. YOU LOOK LIKE A VERY SMART BOY TO ME.
I KNOW I'VE BEEN SECRETIVE ABOUT JIMMY, BUT –
I TRUST YOU, CLAYTON. AS THE LORD DOES, TOO.
CLAY, WILL I EVER SEE YOU AGAIN?
UH, SURE JIMMY... BUT IT MIGHT BE A WHILE FROM NOW... SOMETIME SOON, THOUGH.
"I'LL SEND YOU COPIES OF ALL THE MAGAZINES THAT MY STORIES ARE PUBLISHED IN," I TOLD HIM. "AND I'LL WRITE YOU LOTS OF LETTERS."
A FEW WEEKS AFTER I RETURNED HOME I WAS ASSIGNED TO DO A 30,000 WORD CAP STRONG NOVEL. I WANTED TO DO A PLOT THAT WOULD INVOLVE A YOUNG SHOESHINE BOY. I CAME UP WITH A VARIATION ON MARK TWAIN'S OLD PRINCE AND THE PAUPER STORY.

JIMMY, AN ORPHAN SHOESHINE BOY MEETS HIS IDENTICAL LOOK-ALIKE JAMES, A RICH INDUSTRIALIST'S SON. JAMES PERSUADES JIMMY TO, FORGIVE THE PUN, 'TRADE SHOES' AND ASSUME THE OTHERS' LIFE FOR ONE WEEK.
MEANWHILE OVER IN BURMA NATIVES ARE BEING FOUND MYSTERIOUSLY ROASTED ALIVE. THE FRIED CORPSES ARE BEING DUMPED AT A CONSTRUCTION SITE FOR A NEW LUMBER CAMP OPERATED BY A U.S. COMPANY OWNED BY INDUSTRIALIST MARCUS VANDERGRAAF - THE FATHER OF JAMES.
"LET THE BODIES BE A WARNING TO THOSE YANKEE DOGS! THEY CANNOT INVADE MY TERRITORY!" OUR VILLAIN ANNOUNCES. HIS NAME IS ZON. THE NATIVES OF THE ISOLATED REGION THAT HE RULES WITH THE IRON FIST OF A WARLORD CALL HIM— ZON, THE UNHOLY!
HE'S A FU MANCHU TYPE OF LIVING SATAN WHO INVENTS DEADLY WEAPONS TO USE AGAINST THE WORLD.

BUT, ZON WANTS TO ENSURE THAT VANDERGRAAF GETS THE MESSAGE. HE HAS JAMES KIDNAPPED IN NEW YORK.
A DESPERATE VANDERGRAAF CALLS CAP STRONG, UNAWARE THAT HIS REAL SON IS SAFE AND PLAYING THE ROLE OF A SHOESHINE BOY.
JIMMY IS LOCKED IN ZON'S LABORATORY-FORTRESS. HE TRIES TO TELL HIS STRANGE, SINISTER CAPTORS THAT HE'S ONLY A SHOESHINE BOY BUT, OF COURSE, THEY JUST LAUGH AT HIM.

Cap Strongs special gyro-flying boat 'the Scarlet Skimmer' was five hours out of Rangoon when they spotted Zon's fortress
"There's a native village down there on the shore of the river," Corsair Cobb told his cockpit companions.
"Maybe we can enlist their aide," Chattanooga said as Cap brought the Skimmer down on the water.
The native warriors approached the flying boat by canoe and brandished their spears.
"They could be trying to frighten us off out of superstitious fear," Chattanooga said.
"Look closely at their canoes," Cap told his friend.
"We'll have to fight our way ashore," Cap declared.

...Poison-tipped arrows bounced off the metal hull of the Skimmer.
Cap and his two aides opened fire from atop one of the flying boats floats. It was a deadly fusillade of pistol and revolver shots.
"I haven't been in a canoe in years," Corsair announced with a smile.
"Enjoy it while you can", Cap replied grimly.

Cap carried the strange, silver shield as they ran through the jungle.

"In a cloudless sky like to-day your rescuers will soon find that I am invincible!" Zon pronounced with satanic pride.

"Your father has sent rescuers for you, boy," Zon said as he tied Jimmy to the post. "He is a fool!"

"Turn the solar lens to the boy!" Zon ordered.

The huge twenty foot lens was turned on its base. The sun's rays were caught by the glass and aimed at the kidnapped boy. The light of the evil weapon blinded Jimmy at first. He cried out in pain and fear. Then he began to feel the heat. Searing, magnified heat that had burned alive many poor natives.

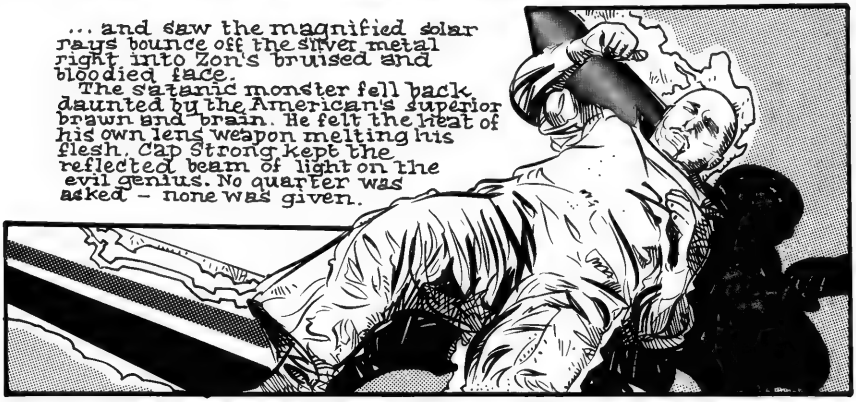
"Stop it!" Jimmy yelled. "My name's Jimmy Carter! My name's Jimmy Carter!"

Jimmy had fainted when Cap Strong came upon the horrific scene.
"It's over for you, Zon!" Cap shouted to the yellow fiend. "I'm taking the boy from you."
The oriental madman raised his machete. He laughed and gestured to Cap. "Come and get him, Yankee pig!"
"Come, fool! Come get him ... and die!" Zon threatened as he stepped to block Cap's path to the top of the dais.
"Your little shield will not protect you from the wrath of Zon!"

Jimmy awoke during the battle. He was surprised to see that Cap did not use his shield to protect himself from Zon's whirling machete.
The two combatants exchanged hateful, bare knuckle blows.

Zon lay dazed. Cap used the opportunity to pick up the shield that he had kept in reserve until this moment. He held it up in front of Jimmy...

...and saw the magnified solar rays bounce off the silver metal right into Zon's bruised and bloodied face.
The satanic monster fell back, daunted by the American's superior brawn and brain. He felt the heat of his own lens weapon melting his flesh. Cap Strong kept the reflected beam of light on the evil genius. No quarter was asked - none was given.



Zon was quickly....

going up in flames,

like the very fires of Hell itself.

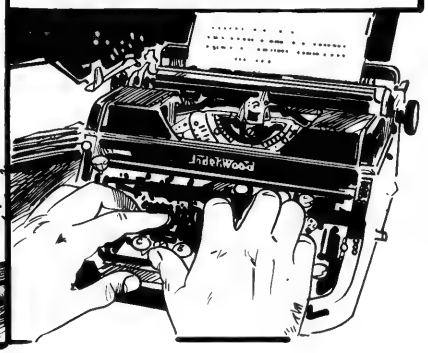
"How's the boy, Cap?" Corsair asked.

"He'll live," Cap Strong replied and then issued orders to his aides. "Corsair, turn the lens onto Zon's fortress. I want it burned to the ground! Chattanooga, I want you to go to the slave pen and free the people being held prisoner inside."

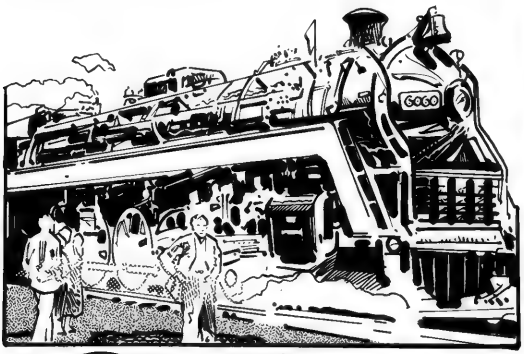
R.T.

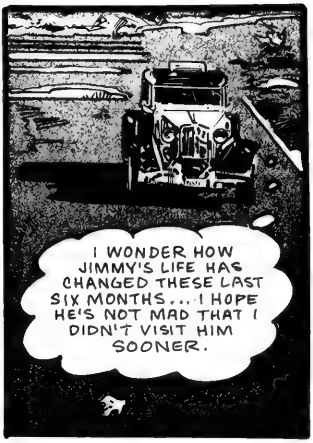
AS I PUT THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON MY STORY—

— I SMILED TO MYSELF IMAGINING JIMMY'S FACE AS HE READ THE STORY. THAT WOULDN'T HAPPEN FOR A FEW MONTHS, THOUGH. THIS STORY WASN'T NEEDED FOR PRINTING RIGHT AWAY.



MY LIFE CHANGED IN MANY WAYS IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS - BUT THAT'S ANOTHER STORY. EVENTUALLY I FOUND TIME TO RETURN TO VISIT JIMMY.





THERE'S THE ORPHANAGE... GEEZ, I REALLY LEFT THIS PLACE WITH MIXED FEELINGS AND YET NOW, STRANGELY, I'M DRAWN TO ITS SERENITY.
IT'S LIKE AN OASIS IN A TROUBLED WORLD.

HEY, CLAY. THIS STORY HAS A SHOE-SHINE BOY NAMED JIMMY IN IT.
YEAH. THAT'S YOU, YOU'RE IN THE STORY.
WOW!
ISN'T THAT NICE, JIMMY? AREN'T YOU GLAD YOU CAN READ THESE STORIES NOW?
WHAT?
YOU MEAN HE COULDN'T READ WHEN I BROUGHT HIM HERE? I THOUGHT HE WAS READING MY STORIES BACK IN NEW YORK.
NO. WHEN YOU BROUGHT HIM HERE HE COULDN'T WRITE HIS OWN NAME. HE ENJOYED THESE MAGAZINES BECAUSE HE LIKED LOOKING AT THE PICTURES.

FIN.

LOGO BY RON HOBBS

PULP FEVER

Send Letters to: PULP FEVER, c/o Dragon Lady Comic Shop, 200 Queen St. W., Toronto, Ontario M5V 1Z2

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE CREATORS

After this issue of Wordsmith we will change to a quarterly frequency of publication. This change is not a recent decision. In fact, before the first issue of the series was ever released we were all in agreement that this change would occur at this point.

Deni reluctantly agreed to our wish to go quarterly when we stressed to her that the quality of the book would suffer on a bi-monthly schedule. She told us that she had been an ELFQUEST **fan and, despite being in favor of quality, she had found it hard to wait three months for the latest installment. We sympathized with her. It was hard for us to wait for the latest chapters of the** ROCKEETER, **but we knew we would be getting quality and so we waited. We did so reluctantly — but patiently.**

We hope that you, the readers, will understand. There is a price to be paid for endeavours that stress 'quality' before 'quantity.' We brought Wordsmith to Deni because we knew she believed comics could be an art — not just a craft. But art can't be rushed. Nor does it come off assembly-lines. 'Alternative' comics have to be produced in 'alternative' ways — and they have to be supported by 'alternative' attitudes.

Thank you.

Dear Dave and Rick,

Most comics are power fantasies. Certainly it was that way when we were growing up. With **Superman** comics, not only could we leap tall buildings with a single bound, but we were also morally righteous, adored by all humanity and loved with a maniacal devotion by the prettiest little girl Curt Swan could draw. What more could a child hope for?

Comics continued to grow with us and the rest of the "baby-boomers". **Spiderman** was a power fantasy that a kid of 12 or 14 could relate to. Peter Parker may have been a geek around the school but he was a **smart** geek. He even had a girlfriend. And, of course, at night he went off and took out his hostilities upon evil-doers with righteous indignation.

As we grew older we stopped seeking power gratification through the comic characters and looked instead to the comic creators. We didn't see ourselves as **Conan the Barbarian** so much as Barry Smith. The comic artists we idolized were young and, by implication, sexy, rich and powerful enough to tell Marvel to stick it (as so many of them did.) This was really something to a bunch of young fans whom Marvel had been telling to stick it for years.

But we grew up. It became impossible to identify with super-powered comic characters and we also came to realize that their creators were, by and large, nothing special either. Maturity gave us our own lives and we took responsibility for our own successes and failures.

As much as we love comics it had become harder and harder to accept the power fantasies comics have to offer. Even most of the so-called "adult" ones leave a lot to be desired. **Heavy Metal** is sick; **Epic** is childishness dressed-up to look mature and the alternatives are usually no alternative.

Of course, there **are** exceptions.

Wordsmith is one of them. It is still a power fantasy, but one which, as an adult, I can relate to. Clay Washburn has challenges not from Supercriminals or alien races, but from his boss, women, communist philosophers, prospective employers and colleagues.

What is Clay's power; the one that I can fantasize about?

He learns from his experiences. He thinks about what happens to him and uses these experiences to make himself into a better individual.

I'd rather be able to do that then be able to cling to a wall or lift up a building.

Thanks, Dave and Rick.

Ron Kasman, Toronto, Ontario

Dear Deni, Dave and R.G.,

Wordsmith no.1 was a genuine surprise. Years ago (more than I care to remember) while in high school I met a character who was to be one of my life's major guiding lights. His name was **Walter Mitty**, and he was perhaps the ultimate day-dreamer. If anybody out there doesn't know who I refer to, let them hit up their local library quick for a collection of James Thurber's short stories and essays.

Is there any writer out there who didn't see a kindred soul in the hen-pecked Mitty who was forever dreaming himself into strange and exotic adventures. Adventures wherein he was always the center force; the hero.

Apparently Dave Darrigo was infected by the same reverie and decided it was high time to bring him back. Old Walter that is-but this time under a different disguise as pulp author supreme, Clay Washburn. Ironically enough this is all taking place in the same depression era that the original first appeared in. Gee, you don't think that Wordsmith is, mayhap, just another episode in Mitty's ever-creating mind, do you?

Okay, I've had my fun. I liked the whole concept, and how not to? Welcome back, Walter...er, Clay. And you too, Dave.

Artwise was an altogether different matter. Taylor's work is really loose and has a quality about it that reminds me of Gene Colan. Which means I'd like it even more if the inks were tighter or the whole thing done in color. Some series can get away with black and white, but this really isn't one of them. By its sheer scope this book explores the heart of story-telling and the true definition of Adventure. It demands colors of every conceivable hue and texture. Your cover and the beautiful promo poster (as seen in the current Comics Buyer's Guide) attest to that fact.

I realize that this is a complaint that is regulated by dollar signs on your side, but it's still a genuine weakness. Lets hope the title sells millions and makes you rich. Then maybe the

color thing would be addressed.

All in all, a damn good beginning from a fine team. Much good luck.

Ron Fortier, Somersworth, New Hampshire.

...To tell you the truth, Ron, color isn't that important to us. We like to think of Wordsmith as an old movie from the early '30's. Sort of like, "Pulp Writer Meets The Dead End Kids". There is a gritty, urban motif to the idea that would be lost by color. Ideally we'd like to have Clay's real life in black and white and his pulp stories in color, but that sophisticated printing process is far beyond Renegade's capacity right now.

....A Note from Dave:

Okay, you want to know why T.M. Maple gets so many letters published? Because you're sitting there reading this with your hands under your butt, that's why! Maple takes the time to neatly type his thoughts out and send them in. Granted, his thoughts are never too negative; but I'm sure that he doesn't like every **bloody comic out there!**

Maple lives up here in our neck of the woods, but I don't know who he is. He knows what I'm going to say right now - that I was sick of seeing his by-line so often. But now that I'm on the other side of the fence and see first-hand the paucity of good letters that plague me I have to admit that I welcome his missives.

Hey, if you want letters pages in comics then you've got to support them. Get off your high horse and write to them. Make your letters informative, entertaining, critical and, above all, thought-provoking.

We thank all of those people out there who have already written to us, although their efforts are not appearing here in print.

Dear Pulpish Ones,

You know what I like about this comic book? I like that it is produced in Canada. And you know why I like the fact that it is produced in Canada? Because it saves me 5 cents on postage for this letter...But,seriously, folks—

An incurable letterhack like myself is certain to be drawn to a mag that stars a writer. Imagine! **A writer** as the star of a comic-and he doesn't even have a super-powered secret identity! Actually, I think that the basic situation that you have set up here is very nicely done. We have Clay's life for all of the experiences of a writer to be displayed, plus the more mundane aspects of his everyday life. And then we have the stories he writes, which can give us slam-bang adventures. I wonder if any of the characters that Clay writes will turn up regularly? Thus, we could have a series of serials within a serial! (Sort of like what happened with ol' "Fearless" in the **L'll Abner** strip) Sounds like a good idea to me. I await to see your plans on this.

I will also be interested to see how you use the 1930's background that you have established. On the one hand, I suppose that that era was inevitable since it was the golden age of the Pulps, but then, you could have set it in slightly more modern times; so I figure you must have some affection for this period. Am I correct in this? Events and condition of the '30's obviously provide yet another source of story material.

I find myself wondering what city this is supposed to be taking place in. You imply in the text piece that it is New York City since "only the very best writers could send in their manuscripts from elsewhere" (and Clay is not portrayed as being among the very best!), but I seem to recognize at least one or two buildings of a ...er...local flavour.

I don't know if this mag can succeed on today's action-oriented market, but from what I've seen in #1, I certainly hope so!

A word of warning, though: The **minute** I hear the word "mutant" here, I'm gone!

T.M. Maple,Toronto, Ontario

...Yes, T. M., Clay is living and working in New York. We were hoping that our splash page in #1 was making that point clear, but we should have made secondary reference points throughout the story to support it.

And, yes, those are local Toronto scenes that you recognize. They are in the Queen Street West area of our city. This area is well-known to movie and TV production people who have films that are set in the '30's and '40's. It seems a year doesn't go by without 4 or 5 "period productions" being filmed here. It was only natural that we would use this convenient locale for reference in Wordsmith.

By the way, Queen Street West is also the home of the huge Eaton Center complex. This is the model for Howard Chaykin's 'Plex' in AMERICAN FLAGG.

Dear Pulpish Ones,

There certainly wasn't a lot of physical action in 2, but you won't hear any complaints from me on that, especially since there was plenty of mental and intellectual action.

I think that Clay's dilemma can be viewed on at least two levels besides the one that you explicitly dealt with in the story. The first one has to do with his writing or, more broadly, with his professional career. Perhaps it can be put in terms of Art versus Craft. Clay had been concentrating very hard on developing his craft, i.e., developing the skill with which he could produce pulp stories. This was necessary, to him, for reasons of professional pride and economic well-being. However, this can be said of any laborer: The more efficient, skilled and productive a worker is, the more he will earn (generally speaking). One can speak of the craft of house-painting or ditch-digging as much as the craft of writing, and it has essentially the same implications. But then Moses brought up a fundamental question about the nature or conception of pulp stories, i.e., about their artistic elements. This broadens out the scope in which Clay viewed his stories. Now he was looking at them in terms of their worth and meaning-not just as stories to be produced. In other words, a story is capable of being viewed as a work of art, in a way that a painted wall or a ditch is not. What Clay found was that art is a lot more confusing than craft! It is more difficult to grasp and pursue. Just as Science is conceptually straightforward because it asks the question, "How?", while Religion is a vast maze because it deals with, "Why?" we find that Craft addresses the rather simple question, "How?" while Art looks at the ever-elusive, "Why?

On a second level, Clay's doubts can be viewed in terms of the way in which we view our lives. Clay had been concentrating so hard on the minutiae of grinding out stories that he had never really stopped to think about their wider meanings.

And so it is with all of us as we live our lives. We deal with things day-to-day or week-to-week or month-to-month, but seldom stop to consider life's wider context or meaning. Part of this is because it is difficult to break away from the important matters at hand (just as Clay had to concentrate on just writing in order to earn money), but also it is because it can be frightening to consider the meaning of life (just as it was discomfitting to Clay to think about the context of his stories).

It is interesting to note that while Moses caused Clay to look at pulp stories from a different perspective, Moses most likely could not actually write a pulp story. He could examine the story as art, but knew nothing of the craft of producing them. Perhaps it is **because** he was not distracted by considerations of craft that he could bring up an artistic consideration.

By the way, Moses looked rather too modern in appearance to me, especially in hairstyle. (Sort of reminded me of the out-of-place appearance of Micheal Landon on "Little House On The Prairie". One kept expecting to see a hair salon somewhere on the ranch.)

The city this time was obviously New York than in the first issue. This is welcome since it places Clay at the heart of the pulp industry, making various forms of interplay more likely.

T.M. Maple, Toronto, Ontario

...The conflict of Craft and Art is an underlying theme of Wordsmith. One that we hope appeals to more people than just aspiring writers. Anyone who reads hero-fiction must want to know how ***they're created, as well as WHY they need to read them. Clay himself knows how to do it--but he's also got a need to find out why he has to do it.***

NEXT ISSUE

In Wordsmith 5 (available in May) Clay meets a visiting German writer who asserts that Doc Savage is the kind of mythic Aryan hero that Adolf Hitler would make a household name in the new Nazi state.

Clay, under the watchful gaze of his friends, takes great — and unexpected — umbrage at the German's remarks. Later, Clay's friends play an elaborate prank on him to test his political opinions. It's all in a story that we call, "Even Heroes Have To Take A Joke."

Also — besides Pulp File and Pulp Pinup, you will see a new illustrated feature called Pulp Portrait. The first Portrait showcases The Shadow.

THE PULP FILE

by Don Hutchison

Walter B. Gibson: The Shadow's Shadow

Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows!

Probably No lines in radio or in the history of mystery literature are as famous. Following his magazine debut in April of 1931 The Shadow reigned supreme for almost two decades — on the airwaves, in his own longlived pulp title, and in comics and movies, as well as toys, games and all the other paraphernalia associated with a commercially created folk-myth idol. For legions of fans The Shadow was the uncrowned king of mystery. He was mystery personified.

If one were to ask "Who is/was the Shadow?", a generation of radio buffs would intone, "The Shadow is, in reality, Lamont Cranston, wealthy young man about town who, years ago in the Orient, learned the hypnotic power to cloud men's minds so they could not see him." And another generation of pulp story enthusiasts would reply, "Not so." It seems that pulp readers were privy to more confidential disclosures. In the magazine stories Lamont Cranston was but one of the disguises of the real Shadow who was Kent Allard, an explorer-aviator-adventurer whose super-normal powers (**not** including invisibility) were transferred from the ancient Tibetan Master, Ten T'ze and whose identity as the Avenger is known only to two Xinca Indians sworn to eternal secrecy.

Disguise was also to be a way of life for the master wordsmith who created and chronicled the adventures of The Shadow. His real name was Walter Brown Gibson. Yet all but two of the 283 Shadow novels he wrote were originally published under the pen name Maxwell Grant. As the fame of his character grew, Gibson's anonymity must have proved frustrating. He began to inject characters with monickers like Blister Wagon, Wilton Barges, Lewis G. Barton and Granite Bowles — all anagrams of his real name.

An irrepressible raconteur brimming with energy, Gibson was a fascinating, many-sided individual who was as gentle and considerate as he was dynamic.

As many of you know, Walter Gibson died last December, just three months past his 88th birthday. A ripe old age, perhaps, but many of us who knew him had hoped that he might prove as durable as his splendid fictional creation. At the time of his death there was a new but unfinished Shadow novel in his typewriter. In the glory days Walter could — and often did — knock off a Shadow book in a week; but he had been suffering from arthritis and cataracts, afflictions that must have made the writing difficult.

I learned of Walter's passing through a phone call from Dave Darrigo, author of **Wordsmith.** Dave confided that when he first conceived this book his inspiration for the character Clay Washburn had been that of Walter Gibson. At first, Dave planned to dedicate this issue to the memory of Walter. Fearing that this might be too easy a gesture to express his intense admiration, he suggested a PULP FILE tribute to the wordsmith who cast the longest shadow. Nothing could please me more.

Walter Gibson never wrote a formal autobiography but in his later years he was exceedingly generous with both his time and information. His many interviews, articles, replies to letters, and introductions to various books form an ongoing record of the life and times of the man who appears to have been born and bred to be The Shadow's personal raconteur.

"Magic and Mystery," Gibson once wrote, "are so closely interwoven that it is hard to tell where one leaves off and the other begins."

Magic and Mystery. Mystery and Magic. These were the polarities of Gibson's existence; and they would become the secret of the special qualities which would raise The Shadow beyond the level of a mere pulp character.

While still a young boy, Walter took to puzzle-making and sleight-of-hand, and thought seriously of making magic his life's work. Instead he became a reporter for the now-defunct **Philadelphia North American** and later moved on to the old **Ledger Syndicate** where he wrote Sunday features and, with his "Puzzle a Day" column, helped to make the crossword puzzle a national craze.

A friend and confidante of this century's greatest magicians — **Houdini, Thurston, Blackstone** — Gibson ghosted books for all of them as well as devising many of their illusions. Following Houdini's death, the Houdini estate allowed him access to all of the magician's unpublished notes, enabling Gibson to write "Houdini's Escapes," the first definitive and only authorized account of the master mystifier's actual methods.

In 1930 The Shadow entered Gibson's life. It was a meeting decreed by fate.

Foremost amongst the pulp publishers of the 1930's was **Street & Smith,** the fabled fiction factory. The company sponsored a Thursday night radio program, one of whose functions was to promote their **Detective Story** magazine. The "announcer" on the program was a mysterious character with a sepulchral voice known as The Shadow —purely a radio gimmick to lend an air of mystery to the proceedings.

Surprisingly, the mysterious radio voice caught the public fancy. Acting quickly, the Messrs. Street & Smith decided to issue a magazine called **The Shadow,** copyrighting the title to protect their new discovery. As Gibson tells it he happened to drop by their offices one day and was asked if he could develop a 75,000-word story about a mysterious being called The Shadow. There were no further plans for the magazine. The company was so disinterested that they did not bother to assign an artist to paint a cover, instead recycling an old cover from a 1919 **Thrill Book.** Gibson utilized the names of two magic dealers, Maxwell Holden and U.F. Grant, to create his inspired pseudonym.

Almost to everyone's surprise, the first issue sold out. The magazine went from quarterly to monthly, and within a year or two was selling more than 300,000 copies per issue. Gibson signed yet another contract. The magazine would appear twice a month; he was to produce twenty-four adventures per year, one 60,000-word novel every two weeks for as long as the popularity of The Shadow continued. That figure totalled more than 1,440,000 words

THE PULP FILE

by Don Hutchison

per year.

The circulation soared. By living, thinking, even dreaming the life of The Shadow, Gibson was to chronicle the Master Avenger's activities for a hectic 18 years. Keeping a dozen yarns ahead of publication he sometimes turned out a fresh book in from four to six days, often working all night to meet self-imposed deadlines.

Behind a typewriter, he was as superhuman as his own creation. He worked on a battery of machines. When one began to "get tired," he'd move on to another, and then a third. He worked in a continuous flow, actually **living** the life of The Shadow as he typed, until his fingers began to swell or the tips became bloody.

Unlike other pulp heroes, The Shadow did not remain fixed or static in character — and neither did his adventures. The two were always in a state of flux, as mercurial and energetic as the man who pounded them out in a creative fever. Most of the early exploits involved proxy heroes, with The Shadow remaining off-stage as a nebulous figure of Gothic mystery, almost omniscient. As Gibson — and his readers — became familiar with the character, the image solidified into that of a sinister magician-wraith, confounding evil-doers with a bag of tricks ranging from wall-hugging suction cups to finger-snapping explosive powders.

In the evocative cover paintings by the **Rozen** brothers and **Graves Gladney** the cloak became crimson-lined with a crimson collar hiding his mouth (pulp covers needed color!), leaving the "burning eyes" and "hawk-like" visage prominently exposed. Other icons which appeared frequently on those amazing covers included The Shadow's two cannon-like automatics and a fire opal ring.

In contrast to The Shadow of radio fame — who had only "his friend and companion, the lovely Margot Lane" to assist him — the pulp Shadow was supported by a veritable army of aides. And, whenever necessary the Knight of Darkness dispensed with his fighting togs to assume the guise of Lamont Cranston, Henry Arnaud or "Fritz," the dull-mannered janitor at police headquarters. As Cranston he maintained a friendship with Police Commissioner Ralph Weston; as Fritz he managed to keep an eye on Weston's right-hand man, Inspector Joe Cardona. Sometimes he appeared as a character named George Clarendon, sometimes as elderly Phineas Twambley, and once as the Rajah of Lengore. In one story, "The North Woods Mystery," The Shadow is revealed as Beaver Luke, an Indian character who is said to be establishing new beaver colonies for the Canadian government.

Shadow historian **Anthony Tollin** said to me recently that he felt what made Gibson's stories unique was the unusual combination of a magician's flair for misdirection and illusion with a journalist's respect for facts and accuracy. Gibson always stressed that no matter how fanciful his yarns might become, the descriptions of people, places and things were accurate in essential details. Despite his mind-numbing work schedule the reporter in him took the time to check on guns, gems, cults, wills, spies, ghosts, morgues and all sorts of deadly devices that The Shadow might encounter. He briefed himself on unusual localities and strange legends that would intrigue readers.

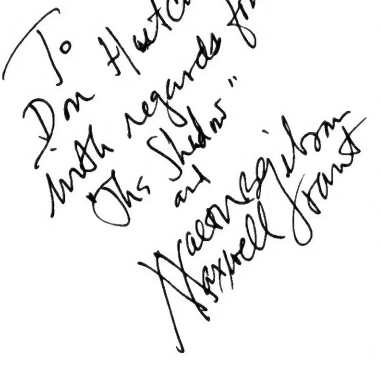
"I always tried to keep the stories informative," Gibson said. "You pick up any of The Shadows and you read about something happening on the Limited between New York and Savannah, you'll find it's running exactly according to the timetable of 1936 or whenever the story was written."

Because of the speed with which he had to work, combined with his lively interest in all things, many of the characters and details of The Shadow novels are like an ongoing record of the author's life and enthusiasms. Almost everything was grist for his story mill. One example of how closely The Shadow's exploits followed those of his raconteur occurred in "The Magigals Mystery". The story not only featured a real-life group of lady magicians, but Walter wound up marrying the head of **the Magigals, Litzka Raymond**, in the year that the novel was published. In my last conversation with Walter, just two years ago in Toronto, he revealed that the 1936 Shadow yarn, "The Northwoods Mystery," had been based on an actual trip into the Ontario Northland. "You know, I was criticized for including a French Canadian guide named Pierre," Walter confided. "Some people thought the character and his name were too much of a 'pulp magazine cliche' or something. But, darn it, I really did have a guide who was just like that character — and his name really **was** Pierre!"

When The Shadow magazine folded in 1949, Walter Gibson turned to other writing. In addition to the 283 Shadow novels, his career encompassed 149 other books of all types, some 500 magazine pieces, newspaper syndicate work, comics, radio, puzzles, magic tricks and a host of other material under various pen names.

Eventually, numerous revivals of The Shadow enabled Gibson to climb out from behind the Maxwell Grant pen name. He enjoyed increasing public recognition in newspaper and magazine articles, radio and television appearances, and as a guest at various conventions. He even made peace with his famous pseudonym, and designed a signature in which the two names were intertwined. In 1979 he was awarded a Master's Fellowship by the **Academy of Magical Arts and Sciences,** an award never before given to a non-performing magician. Another honor — the **Lamont Award** — was named after his creation and is bestowed annually for outstanding contributions to the field of pulp research.

In the final analysis, the greatest monument to Walter Gibson's memory is his own legacy.

He delighted in Magic. He delighted in puzzles. He delighted in writing.

And he created a legend.